

Americans Divided on Media Treatment of Trump: Gallup

WASHINGTON - Two weeks since newly-elected U.S. President Donald Trump took office, Americans are split in their assessments of whether the U.S. news media is covering the Trump administration fairly, a new Gallup poll found.

Just over a third of Americans, at 36 percent, think the media has been too tough on Trump, while just under a third, or 31 percent, think it has been about right, according to the poll. Twenty-eight percent say the media has not been tough enough. Republicans overwhelmingly believe the media has been too tough on Trump, the poll found.

However, this masks broad



disapproval among Republicans, who mostly believe the media – which Trump has declared “the opposition party” – is being too hard on the new Republican president. Meanwhile, about half of Democrats think the media should be tougher on Trump, according to a Gallup poll released Friday.

Trump’s team has battled against what it describes as the U.S. media’s unfair coverage of a number of issues. The White House has fought against some media estimates of the size of Trump’s inauguration crowd being relatively small, and against media descriptions of Trump’s visa ban as a...*(More on P4)...(24)*

Merkel Says she will Seek Common Ground with Trump Wherever Possible

BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel says she will seek common ground “wherever possible” with U.S. President Donald Trump’s administration, despite differences over Trump’s entry ban for citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries.

Germany has Europe’s biggest economy and is a major exporter. In 2015, the U.S. was its biggest trading partner, and there’s concern in Berlin over the possibility of a more protectionist ap-

proach in Washington. Merkel told reporters in Munich on Monday: “We will try to find common ground wherever possible.” She stressed the importance of NATO, and acknowledged the need for Germany to “do more in the area of defense.”

Merkel said: “We will see issue by issue where we can cooperate and where we have different opinions, but it’s in Germany’s interest to strengthen the common ground there is.” *(AP)*

WASHINGTON - President Donald Trump said he respects Vladimir Putin, and when an interviewer called the Russian leader “a killer,” Trump said the United States has many of them.

“What do you think? Our country’s so innocent,” he told Fox’s Bill O’Reilly in an excerpt released by the network. The president’s interview was to air Sunday afternoon on the Super Bowl pregame show.

Trump has long expressed a wish for better ties with Moscow, praised Putin

and signaled that U.S.-Russia relations could be in line for a makeover, even after U.S. intelligence agencies determined that Russia meddled in the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign to help Trump win against Democrat Hillary Clinton. Putin has called Trump a “very bright and talented man.”

During Putin’s years in power, a number of prominent Russian opposition figures and journalists have been killed. In the interview, Trump says, “I do respect him,”



and then is asked why. “I respect a lot of people, but that doesn’t mean I’m going to get along with him. He’s a leader of his country. I say it’s better to get along with Russia than not. And if Russia helps in the fight against ISIS, which is a major fight, and Islamic terrorism all over the...*(More on P4)...(25)*

Asked About Putin, Trump Says US Isn’t ‘So Innocent’

Britain’s May Meets Israeli PM in London

LONDON - British prime minister Theresa May was hosting a meeting at 10 Downing Street Monday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The two have never previously had a face-to-face meeting.

The pair will be discussing increasing trading relations between the two countries after Britain leaves the European Union.

May is also expected to express the British government’s concerns over settlement building in the West Bank. An of-

ficial spokesperson at 10 Downing Street said the talks will cover a range of security and international issues, including the Middle East peace process.

Ahead of the meeting, Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the opposition Labour Party, called on May to tell Netanyahu that building settlements on occupied Palestinian land undermines trust.

An official communique is expected to be released after the private talks at Number 10 have finished. *(Xinhua)*

TEHRAN - Russia says it disagrees with the administration of US President Donald Trump’s characterization of Iran as a “terrorist state.”

Several officials in Trump’s inner circle are known for visceral acrimony toward Iran. Trump himself, who is a former businessman with no prior political career of his own, has also been striking a belligerent tone on Iran, particularly regarding a nuclear deal that Tehran negotiated with six other countries – including the US – back in 2015. Trump has said

the deal benefited the other parties to the deal more than it did American businesses.

But in a first remark that closely resembled his aides’ rhetoric on the Islamic Republic, Trump told Fox News on Sunday that Iran was “terrorist state number one.”

Reacting to that remark on Monday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, “We disagree with this postulate,” Russia’s ITAR-TASS news agency reported.

US Defense Secretary James Mattis had on Sat-



urday called Iran “the single biggest state sponsor of terrorism in the world.” While it was his first comment on Iran since taking over as the US’s defense secretary, the retired US Marines Corps general had made similar remarks on numerous occasions in the past.

Earlier, Trump’s national security adviser, Michael Flynn, had said the US was putting Iran “on notice” over...*(More on P4)...(26)*

Russia Disagrees with US on Iran Characterization

Kerry, Albright Warn Court Against Travel Ban

WASHINGTON - John Kerry and Madeleine Albright, both former secretaries of state, are joining former top U.S. national security officials in asking the courts to continue blocking President Donald Trump’s recent immigration order.

Most of the former officials served under President Barack Obama. They said travel restrictions on seven Muslim-majority nations would disrupt “thousands” of lives, while likely “endangering U.S. troops in the field” and hurting partnerships



with other countries to combat terrorism.

The group wrote that the order will aid the Islamic State group’s “propaganda effort and serve its recruitment message by feeding into the narrative

that the United States is at war with Islam.” They add: “Blanket bans of certain countries or classes of people are beneath the dignity of the nation and Constitution that we each took...*(More on P4)...(27)*

Assad Extends Amnesty Offer to Surrendering Rebels

DAMASCUS - Syrian President Bashar al-Assad on Sunday extended an amnesty announced last year till the end of next June, for all rebels who surrender themselves to the Syrian army, state news agency SANA reported.

The presidential pardon covers all those who have held weapons in the face of the government and fugitives as well as kidnapers on condition to surrender themselves during the time of the pardon.

It is the third extension to the amnesty since it was first announced in late July last year. The government considers the amnesty as a golden chance for the rebels who want to abandon their insurgency, and it was applied for tens of rebels who have surrendered themselves during the past months. This comes as Syrian government and...*(More on P4)...(28)*

Turkish Army Says 33 IS Killed in N. Syria

ANKARA - Thirty-three Islamic State (IS) terrorists were killed after targets belonging to them were hit by Turkish army in Al-Bab of northern Syria in last 24 hours, Turkish General Staff stated on Sunday.

According to the Turkish army, 220 targets belonging to the terrorists have been shelled.

A total of 3680 improvised explosive devices and 55 mines have been destroyed since the beginning of the operation, the military added.

The Turkish Armed Forces launched the Euphrates Shield Operation last August against both IS and the Syrian Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG), the military wing of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD). Turkey regards the YPG and the PYD as terrorist organizations due to their links to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK).

Meanwhile, Turkish police on Sunday detained at least 100 suspected members of IS in anti-terror raids carried out in six provinces, including Ankara, Istanbul, Adiyaman, Konya, Manisa, Samsun, and Gaziantep, Anadolu Agency reported.

Turkish police detained 60 suspects in the capital Ankara’s Sincan, Cubuk, Yenimahalle and Mamak districts, who were mainly foreign nationals. Thirty suspected IS terrorists were detained in simultaneous counter-terror operations in Konya province, and 10 others were detained in Adiyaman province. *(Xinhua)*

On Call with Trump, Italy’s Leader Discusses NATO, Migrants

MILAN - Italy’s premier emphasized the significance of NATO and outlined a new agreement between Italy and Libya to fight human trafficking during a phone call with U.S. President Donald Trump.

Italian Premier Paolo Gentiloni’s office says Sunday that the call Saturday evening focused on “bilateral relations between Italy and the USA, united by a historic friendship and collaboration.”

It said Gentiloni reaffirmed “the fundamental importance of the role of NATO and of collaboration between Europe and the United States in the face of challenges and threats to shared...*(More on P4)...(29)*

Trump Pledges Peace Efforts with Ukraine, Russia

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump said Saturday that his country will work with Ukraine, Russia, and all other parties involved to help restore peace along the Ukraine-Russia border.

Trump made the pledge in a telephone conversation with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, the White House said in a statement, describing it as a “very good call.” The two leaders also discussed the potential for their meeting in the near future, the statement said. The call came as the situation in eastern Ukraine has worsened in recent days with reported ceasefire violations and widespread use of multiple launch rocket systems. Sepa-

ately, Trump spoke with Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni over the phone on Saturday to discuss strengthening bilateral cooperation on issues including security and counter-terrorism. The two leaders discussed Libya, the influx of migrants and refugees into Europe, as well as Italy’s priorities, and the upcoming G7 meeting in Italy, the White House said.

They agreed to continue close coordination and cooperation on efforts to eliminate the Islamic State (IS) group and other terrorist organizations.

During the call, Trump also emphasized the importance of all North Atlantic Treaty Organization...*(More on P4)...(30)*

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China to Donate Humanitarian Aid to Syria Worth 16 Mln USD

DAMASCUS - The Chinese Embassy and the Syrian Planning and International Cooperation Commission (ICC) signed two agreements on Sunday, under which China will provide two batches of humanitarian aid to the Syrian government worth 16 million U.S. dollars.

The agreements were signed by Chinese ambassador to Syria, Qi Qianjin, and Imad Sabuni, the head of the ICC, under which China will send two batches of humanitarian aid to Syria worth 110 million CNY (16 million U.S. dollars).

The delivery of the humanitarian aid will start soon, according to Qi.

During the agreement signing ceremony held in the ICC headquarters in Damascus, Qi expressed happiness for

providing the humanitarian aid to Syria, saying his country has been committed to providing the war-torn country with aid over the past few years.

“We sympathize with the Syrian people for what has befallen their country, and we are signing this agreement with the aim of bolstering friendship between the Chinese and Syrian peoples and to fulfill the international obligations and responsibilities,” he said.

The ambassador also pointed out the “positive progress” made recently in Syria, especially after the battle in the northern city of Aleppo, where the Syrian army succeeded to wrest control over the entire city, after the rebels were...*(More on P4)...(31)*

UAE’s Commendable Role in Pakistan Fight Against Polio

ABU DHABI - A UAE newspaper has said that Pakistan is the closest it has ever been in its mission to eradicate polio from the country.

“In 2016, Pakistan reported only 20 cases. This is a remarkable feat. Less than three decades ago, polio plagued around 1,000 children a day in the country,” said the English Language daily, Khaleej Times, in an editorial on Sunday.

The paper went on to say. “Much has changed since then. Intensive vaccination campaigns and significant healthcare funding by the UAE have brought down the incidence of the disease to 54 in 2015. With

continued efforts in 2017, the country might see a complete eradication of this highly transmissible yet preventable disease.

The paper said that the UAE leadership’s support has been indispensable. In 2011, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, joined forces with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to provide a total of US\$100 million for the fight against polio in Afghanistan and Pakistan – the only two countries that have never been polio-free. *(WAM)*

US Adopts “Hostile” Policies towards Iran: Spokesman

TEHRAN - Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman said Monday that the U.S. government has adopted “hostile and threatening” policies towards Iran.

“This (U.S. policy) is not much surprising and not that important to us,” Bahram Qasemi said in his weekly press briefing. “I still think that we should be patient and not comment hastily over the new U.S. administration’s policies,” he said, adding that “we should wait to see how they are dealing with the global issues.”

The U.S. on Friday announced sanctions on multiple entities and individuals involved in Iran’s

ballistic missile program and providing support to a military force in Iran.

The move came days after Iran launched a ballistic missile test, which drew a stern warning from Washington.

The U.S. Treasury Department said in a statement that the action reflects the U.S. commitment to enforcing sanctions on Iran with respect to its ballistic missile program and “destabilizing” activities in the region, and is fully consistent with the U.S. commitments under the nuclear deal with Iran.

Iran has vowed to counteract the fresh U.S. sanctions. *(Xinhua)*

Turkmenistan Adopts Draft Law on Industrial Safety

ASHGABAT - The draft law “On industrial safety of hazardous production facilities” has been adopted in Turkmenistan at a regular meeting of the country’s parliament of the fifth convocation, the Turkmen government said in a message on Monday.

The document defines the legal, economic and social framework for ensuring safe operation of hazardous production facilities.

In particular, the law is aimed at the prevention of accidents, ensuring preparedness of organizations, which operate facilities of such a kind, operative localization and liquidation of conse-

quences of possible incidents. Turkmenistan is one of the rich countries for its natural gas resources. According to BP, the country’s recoverable reserves are estimated at 17.5 trillion cubic meters of gas or nine percent of total global reserves, which puts Turkmenistan on the fourth position in this field after Iran, Russia and Qatar. The country has an opportunity to export its gas to China and Iran.

Meanwhile, the economy is being diversified in Turkmenistan – the textile industry and the oil and gas processing industry have achieved...*(More on P4)...(32)*